Translation of the lectures of Dr. Mani Dravid Sastri on Brahmasutra
Brahmasutra 1.1.1- अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा

The first question to be considered is, who is the competent person – अधिकारी–– for this Saastra? This is answered by the word 'atha' in the sutra 'athaato brahmajijnaasaa'. Till now the bhaashya was based on the word 'brahmajijnaasaa'. The author of the sutra indicates by this word that it is knowledge that removes nescience and bondage. Since knowledge removes bondage it follows that bondage is a mere superimposition. Thus superimposition is established.

By the word व्याचिख्यासितस्य in the last sentence of adhyaasabhaashya, meaning 'which is intended to be commented on', the Acharya implies that the Vedanta Saastra cannot be explained by the application of the rules of interpretation laid down in purvamimaamsa. In purvamimaamsa the statements in the Vedas have been categorized under five heads—vidhi (injunction), mantra, naamadheya, nishedha (prohibition) and arthavaada (eulogy or censure). According to this division the entire Vedanta will fall under the head 'arthavaada'. Arthavaadas become purposeful only if they are read along with an injunction or a prohibition. For example, there is an injunction that silver should not be given as dakshina in a sacrifice, and only gold should be given. In support of this there is a story. During the war between the Devas and the Asuras the Devas entrusted their valuables to Agni for safe-keeping. They won the war and reclaimed their belongings from Agni, but Agni had developed a desire for the valuables and refused to return them. The Devas then thrashed Agni. Agni began to weep and the tears that fell from his eyes were what became silver. So it is said that if one gives silver as dakshina there will be mourning in his house within a year. The object of this story, which is an arthavaada is merely to emphasize that silver should not be given as dakshina.

Applying the same logic the purvamimaamsakas say that the statement in the Upanishads that the jiva is identical with Isvara is only an arthavaada and it is intended to indicate that the capacity of the jiva is as great as that of Isvara and so he need not have any doubts about his ability to perform all the numerous rites laid down in the Vedas. Thus it is only praise of the jiva. But this logic cannot be applied in respect of Vedanta, because the subject-matter of Vedanta is totally different from that of purvamimaamsa and it is not covered by any other Saastra. So the Vedanta sutras are absolutely necessary for understanding the correct meaning of the Upanishads.

The word 'atha' has many meanings. In this sutra it is used in the sense of 'thereafter'-- अथशब्द आनन्तर्यार्थः परिगृह्यते–
The other meanings are not applicable here as will be shown below.

One of the senses of the word 'atha' is to indicate commencement. It is used in this sense in the yogasutra and in the science of grammar. But

this sense does not fit in here. The subject-matter of this sutra is 'the desire to know Brahman'. It cannot be said that this desire is being commenced, because it s only a person who already has this desire who takes up this study. There is no need to create this desire. Moreover, the subsequent sutras speak about Brahman and knowledge of Brahman and not about desire to know Brahman.

Can we say that brahmajijnaasaa means enquiry about Brahman (Brahmavichaara) and so it can be said that Brahmavichaara is being commenced by this sutra? Such an interpretation may be theoretically possible, but it does not serve any purpose and cannot make the sutra purposeful. It will become purposeful only if we interpret it as indicating the adhikaari or competent person for the study of this Saastra. Here 'atha' means 'after the acquisition of the four-fold requisites' (saadhanachatushtayam).

The word 'atha' has also the meaning 'auspicious', but this meaning cannot syntactically fit into this sentence.

According to Bhamati, the sound 'atha' is no doubt auspicious, but the word 'atha' does not have the meaning 'auspicious'. But according to the bhashya the word has the meaning 'auspicious'. This word has been used in the sense of 'auspicious' by Sriharsha in Naishadha. According to Panini also the sound 'atha' is auspicious and the word 'atha' has the meaning 'auspicious'. Vivarana takes the same view as the bhashya.

When one proposition has been considered and rejected and an alternative proposition is to be postulated, the word 'atha' may be used to introduce the new proposition. As for example, is sound eternal? Or (atha), is it transitory? This sense is also not possible here, because no other proposition has been stated earlier. What the author of the sutra has in mind is 'saadhanachatushtayam'- the four preliminary requisites- after acquiring which alone the enquiry into Brahman is to be taken up.

For enquiry into dharma the study of the Vedas and knowledge of their meaning are the essential qualification. For enquiry into Brahman also these are necessary, but they are not by themselves sufficient. In addition, acquiring purity of mind is also necessary.

Opponent: Purity of mind can be acquired by performing the rituals laid down in the Vedas. For this enquiry into dharma is necessary because only after that he will be able to perform the Vedic rituals.

Answer: This is not an invariable rule. For a person who has purity of mind even on birth the performance of karma is not necessary. He may have attained purity of mind by karma performed in past births. Moreover, it cannot be said for certain that a person would come to Vedanta after completing enquiry about dharma. On the contrary, study of the sutras of Jaimini may have the opposite effect of turning a person away from Vedanta because according to the Jaimini sutras the entire Vedanta is 'arthavaada'.

In the case of sacrifices the Sruti lays down the order in which various rites are to be performed. This has to be followed without question. An order is laid down because the same Adhvaryu has to perform various acts and he can do them only one after another. Instead of leaving it to each Adhvaryu to do the acts in any order he pleases, the Sruti lays down an order so that there will be uniformity. By following this order an unseen benefit is acquired.

Enquiry into Brahman may be taken up by a person after enquiry into dharma if he wishes to do so. But there is no requirement in the Sruti that this alone should be done. The two do not have to be done by the same person and so it is not necessary to lay down any order. There is also no rule that only a person who has already done enquiry into dharma is competent to take up enquiry into Brahman.

In respect of certain sacrifices there is a requirement that it can be done only after doing another specified sacrifice, for example, Somayaga should be performed only after Darsapurna. But there is no such requirement regarding enquiry into dharma and Brahman.

The opponent says: According to one Smriti only after studying the Vedas, begetting sons, and performing Vedic rituals according to his capacity, a Brahmana should direct his mind towards liberation. Another Smriti says that a Brahmana who desires liberation without studying the Vedas, begetting sons, and performing sacrifices goes to hell.

The answer to this is that the purport of these Smritis is that only a person who has attained detachment is entitled to enter the sannyasa ashrama. Sannyasis have the primary competence (mukhya adhikaara) to take up enquiry into Brahman. Householders are also entitled to do Brahmavichaara, but their competence is secondary (gauna adhikaara).

Bhattabhaskara says that the Brahmasutras are a continuation of the sutras of Jaimini. This is not accepted by Sri Sankara. He points out that this is a separate Saastra because the competent person, subject-matter, result and connection (anubandha-chatushtaya) are totally different. The Sruti itself lays down the four preliminary requisites (saadhana chatushtaya).

There is no order laid down that Brahmavichaara should be taken up only after completing Dharmavichaara. The subject- matter and the result to be attained by the two Saastras differ and there is no connection between the two. In Purvamimaamsa the result is Dharma and for this the rites laid down have to be performed. In Vedanta knowledge of Brahman is itself the result and there is nothing to be done thereafter.

According to Bhamati the knowledge attained from the mahavakyas is only mediate (paroksha) and it has to be made immediate (aparoksha) by repeated contemplation. But according to Vivarana the knowledge itself is aparoksha and no further action is necessary. Knowledge of Brahman is always immediate because Brahman is one's own nature and so it is always immediate. But the reason for its not being able to destroy nescience is due to obstructions in the mind. Reflection and contemplation are intended to remove these obstructions.

Prakatartha takes the same view as Vivarana.

Dharma comes into existence only after the prescribed rites are performed. But Brahman is ever existent.

Another difference is that in respect of Dharma there is an injunction to perform an action. But in respect of Brahman there is no injunction to do anything after the rise of knowledge.

In respect of Dharma not only is knowledge imparted, but there is also a prompting to carry out an action. But in respect of Brahman, by knowledge alone the goal is attained and there is no need for prompting for any action. It is like seeing an object in front of a person. As soon as he opens his eyes he sees the object and there is no need to prompt him to see it. The knowledge produced by verbal testimony (Sabda) is aparoksha if the subject-matter of the knowledge is aparoksha. If a man points out to another person standing before him and says "He is so and so", the knowledge obtained about him by the other persons present there at the same time is clearly pratyaksha. The same applies to the self which is ever present. This is how the knowledge from the statement "You are the tenth" becomes immediate.

The word 'chodana' is used in two different senses. One is 'prompting'. Another meaning given in Sabarabhashya itself is 'verbal testimony'. This is the sense in which it is used in the word 'Brahmachodana' in Sri Sankara's Bhashya. This means that knowledge of Brahman arises from the words of the Upanishads themselves.

In purvamimaamsa the injunctions (vidhi) indicate what is dharma and the prohibitions (nishedha) indicate what is adharma. Adharma is not mere absence of dharma, but it is what is opposed to dharma. If the injunctions are followed results such as heaven can be attained. If the prohibitions are complied with and not transgressed, no sin will accrue. The injunctions will produce the desired result only if the acts enjoined are performed with faith and due attention. But if the prohibitions are transgressed even without deliberate intention there will be punishment.

Just as there is so much difference between injunctions and prohibitions, there is also great difference between the part of the Veda dealing with dharma and the part dealing with Brahman. There can therefore no question of sequence between the two. The two Saastras are quite different just as the various limbs of Veda such as Chandas, Nirukta, etc are different from one another. In response to the contention of the purvamimaamsakas that enquiry into Brahman can be taken up after completing enquiry into dharma, performing sacrifices, etc, Prakatarthakara points out that there is no guarantee that a person will live long enough to do this. So, having got a human birth as the result of accumulated punya, one should take to Vedanta as early as possible and strive to attain the ultimate goal, namely, liberation.

The four preliminary requisites (saadhanachatushtayam) are:
नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः, इहामुत्रार्थभोगविरागः, शमदमादिसाधनसंपत्, मुमुक्षुत्वं च.
-- discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral, an attitude of total detachment towards the fruits of action in this world as well as in other worlds, the six disciplines such as control of the mind, control of the senses, etc., and intense yearning for liberation. The first two are indicated by the words of the Upanishad which say that, after examining the transient nature of all the results obtained through action, including the rites prescribed in the Vedas, one should attain detachment towards them and resort to a guru who will impart knowledge of Brahman. The six disciplines beginning with control of the mind are indicated by the statement in the Upanishads (santo danto---) referring to them. The question of Maitreyi to Yajnavalkya asking for knowledge about what will make her immortal indicates the need for intense yearning for liberation.

The discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral is the firm conviction that the Self alone is eternal and the not-self is ephemeral. Detachment follows from this.

Bhamati uses the expression 'discrimination between the real and the unreal' instead of 'the eternal and the ephemeral'. This is because one may not reject some joy merely because it is transient, but one will reject what one knows to be unreal. A person who picks up some object thinking it to be silver will throw it away when he finds that it is not silver but only a shell. Every one knows that all worldly joys are transient, but that knowledge itself does not give rise to detachment. It is only the knowledge that they are not real at all that will create detachment towards them.

In Vivekachudamani also it has been said that the knowledge that Brahman alone is real and the world is not real will lead to detachment. This is the reason why great effort has been made in Vedanta to point out that the world is mithya. The love of the not-self has to be got rid of by cultivating detachment.

Detachment does not mean just absence of attachment or aversion. Even an inanimate object is devoid of attachment and aversion.

Detachment is a mental state which is the opposite of both attachment and aversion in all matters except those which are essential for the maintenance of the body.

From detachment arise control of the mind, control of the senses and the external organs, etc. The mind should not be engaged in anything other than what is essential for hearing, reflection and contemplation. The senses and the other organs should be directed only towards what are essential for living.

Uparati is entering the sannyasa ashrama and giving up karma in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down in the scriptures. It is also taken to mean keeping the mind away from external objects without any vacillation.

When total purity of mind is attained, nitya karma also can be given up by taking sannyasa.

Titiksha- forbearance, is suffering heat, cold, etc., without making any effort to counteract them, as long as life itself is not in danger.

Sraddha is the conviction that what the Saastra and the Guru say is true.

Samaadhaana is keeping the mind intent on hearing, reflection and contemplation, uninterrupted by drowsiness, laziness, etc.

Mumukshutvam follows the acquisition of the first three requisites. The mumukshu is the person competent for Brahmavichaara. Such a person is sure to attain the goal.

The word 'atah' (therefore) in this sutra is meant to answer the objection that there is no possibility of the first two requisites, namely, discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral and detachment arising to a person. The reason for this objection is that the Veda itself says that the result attained by some rites such as 'chaturmasya' is immortality. So it is argued that it is not necessary to attain Brahman for immortality. As regards detachment, the objection is that it cannot arise merely because all joys are accompanied by sorrow, because one can avoid sorrow by some means. The answer to these objections is that the sruti itself says that whatever is attained by karma is transient and so the statement about the result of some karma being immortality is intended only to praise that karma and should not be taken literally. The sruti further says that knowledge of Brahman alone confers the highest goal. Even the pleasures of heaven are not everlasting because they are limited in time. The word 'atah' is used in the first sutra of purvamimaamsa also for the same purpose of answering objections.

_Now the word 'brahmajijnaasaa' is taken up. The word 'brahma' has many meanings, but the meaning to be adopted in the present context is indicated by the second sutra as that from which this universe is born, etc.

ब्रह्मणो जिज्ञासा ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा ।

The sixth case-ending of the word 'Brahman' has to be taken in the accusative sense and not in the sense of mere relation. The word 'jijnaasaa' (desire to know) needs an object. Here there is no object other than Brahman. The sutras deal not only with Brahman but also with many other matters such as the means of realization, the fruit of realization, etc. It may therefore be contended that even by taking the sixth case-ending in the sense of mere relation Brahman would be covered, but this is a roundabout method. Brahman is the main object of enquiry and so the accusative sense is most appropriate. Moreover the sruti says, "Wish to know that, that is Brahman" (Taitt.up.3.1). So the accusative case is in accordance with sruti.

_Now the word jijnaasaa is considered. It means 'the desire to know'.

ज्ञातुमिच्छा जिज्ञासा। ।

We can have desire to know something only if it is at least partly known, but not fully known, and there is some benefit in knowing it. Brahman is known in a general way, but not fully. By knowing it one becomes liberated. So desire to know Brahman can arise. Knowledge of Brahman culminating in actual realization is the object of this desire. So both mediate and immediate knowledge are included here.

According to the purvamimaamsakas knowledge is a modification of the Atma. According to the Naiyayikas knowledge is a quality of the Atma. These two systems recognize only one kind of knowledge and this knowledge has a beginning and an end.

But Advaita recognizes two kinds of knowledge, one that is eternal and another that has a beginning and an end. The sruti mentions knowledge as the very nature of the Atma and says that this knowledge is eternal. Another sruti says that desire, resolve, doubt, attention, knowledge, etc., are all nothing but the mind (Br. Up. 1.5.3). The knowledge spoken of here is the knowledge that arises due to a modification of the mind (vritti) and ends when the modification ends. The mind is the cause of this kind of knowledge because if the mind is engaged elsewhere a person does not see even an object which is in front of him.

This knowledge (or cognition) is a modification of the mind. So it has been said in the Upanishad that it is mind itself. This knowledge is called vrittijnaana. The vritti or modification of the mind takes the form of the object. This knowledge has always to be referred to as associated with its object, as for example, knowledge of pot, etc. It has a beginning and an end. The manner in which this knowledge takes place has been described in Vedantaparibhasha thus:

Just as the water in a tank, issuing through a hole, enters, through a channel, a number of fields and assumes the shapes of those fields, so also the luminous mind, stretching out through the eye, goes to the space occupied by objects and becomes modified into the forms of those objects. Such a modification is called a *vritti* of the mind.

The statement that the mind takes the form of the object is not to be taken literally. Quality, action, etc., have no form, and yet they are also cognized by the mind. What is called ‘aakaara’ or form is only the connection of the knowledge with the object. Knowledge itself has no form according to Advaita.

The mental modification is insentient and so it is not by itself knowledge. Pure consciousness is reflected in this mental modification and the two appear to be non-different. So it is really consciousness that is knowledge, but because of non-discrimination the mental modification is also called knowledge. The origin and destruction of the mental modification are superimposed on consciousness and so we say that this knowledge has a beginning and an end.

In the Bhashya is it is said that the knowledge that culminates in the direct realization of Brahman is the object of the desire indicated by the word ‘jijnaasaa’-- अवगतिपर्यन्तं ज्ञानं सन्वच्यायाः इच्छायाः कर्म, फलविषयत्वादिच्छायाः ।

A desire arises in respect of something that either results in happiness or eradicates sorrow. Realization of Brahman destroys nescience and results in supreme bliss and the total eradication of sorrow and so there can be a desire for this.

The pure consciousness that is the very nature of the Atma does not itself destroy nescience, but only reveals it. Only when pure consciousness is manifested through a vritti of the mind it destroys nescience. This is illustrated by an example. Sunlight reveals grass but does not burn it. But when the same sunlight is passed through a lens it burns the grass.

For realization of Brahman the means is the knowledge arising from the mahavakya.

Objection: Brahman is not known in the world. It is known only through the sruti. If a person has known it through the sruti, there is nothing more to be known. If he has not heard the sruti statement at all, then no desire can arise to know it.

Answer: From the very derivation of the word ‘Brahman’ the ideas of eternality, purity, etc., become known. This word is derived from the root *‘brmh’* and it means ‘very big without any limitation’. From this limitlessness, eternality, purity, etc., follow naturally. From this also follow omniscience, omnipotence, etc-- ब्रह्मशब्दस्य हि व्युत्पाद्यमानस्य नित्यशुद्धत्वादयोऽर्थाः प्रतीयन्ते, बृहतेर्धातोरर्थानुगमात् ।

The existence of Brahman is well known from the fact of its being the self of all. Every one knows that he exists; no one says that he does not exist. So no one can have any doubt about the existence of Brahman which is nothing but his own real nature-- सर्वस्यात्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः । सर्वो ह्यात्मास्तित्वं प्रत्येति, न नाहमस्मीति ।

Though Brahman is thus known in a general way, there are conflicting views about its exact nature. Ordinary people and the materialists of the Lokayata school consider the body possessed of sentience to be the self. Some say that the mind is the self. Some consider it to be only momentary consciousness. Some hold that it is a void. The purvamimaamsakas and Naiyayikas hold that there is a self different from the body, and that it transmigrates and is an agent and an experiencer. The Sankhyas say that the self is only an experiencer and not an agent. Some say that there is a God who is different from the individual. Vedanta says that God is the self of the individual who is the experiencer. In order to attain the highest goal one should ascertain the correct meaning of the Upanishads with the help of reasoning not opposed to the Upanishads. This is what is being done by the subsequent sutras.

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